

## Message Text

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42

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 NEA-14 NIC-01 ACDA-19 IO-14

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /149 W

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P Q 171638Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8922

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD VIA POUCH

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, XF, IS

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESS REACTION TO MAALOT KILLINGS

1. SUMMARY. FIRST SOVIET PRESS REACTION TO MAALOT KILLINGS (PRAVDA MAY 17) SUMMARIZES BEIRUT PRESS CHARGES THAT ISRAELI MILITARY'S "TREACHEROUS ACTIONS" ARE TO BLAME FOR DEATH OF CHILDREN. REPORT SAYS MAALOT RESIDENTS CALLED DAYAN A MURDERER. STORY BY INFERENCE ABSOLVES LEBANON FROM ANY RESPONSIBILITY AND REPORTS U.S. AMBASSADOR DELIVERED ISRAELI NOTE THREATENING LEBANON WITH RETALIATORY AIR RAIDS. SEPARATE TASS ACCOUNT ALSO STRESSES ISRAELI RESPONSIBILITY BUT NOTES THAT SEIZURE OF CHILDREN, AS WELL AS ISRAELI ACTION, IS BEING CONDEMNED IN WORLD'S PRESS. PRAVDA ALSO REPORTS ISRAELI AIR RAIDS ON BEIRUT SUBURBS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRAVDA STORY FROM BEIRUT BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OREKHOV PURPORTS TO SUMMARIZE ARAB PRESS REACTION TO MAALOT KILLINGS. STORY TELLS BARE FACTS OF SEIZURE OF SCHOOL AND HOSTAGES. LEST TOO MUCH SYMPATHY ACCRUE TO VICTIMS, HOWEVER, STORY INCLUDES PALESTINIAN CLAIM THAT CHILDREN WERE MEMBERS OF A "MILITARIZED ISRAELI YOUTH ORGANIZATION."

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3. DESCRIBING HANDLING OF AFFAIR BY GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL,

OREKHOV ACCOUNT STRESSES THAT ATTACKERS DEMANDED RELEASE OF 23 "PALESTINIAN PARTISANS" (A TERM MEANT TO EVOKE POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM SOVIET READERS) HELD IN ISRAELI JAILS IN RETURN FOR FREEING HOSTAGES. MOREOVER, OREKHOV SAYS THAT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WAS GIVEN FOURTEEN HOURS TO MAKE A DECISION AND THAT FIRST REPORTS FROM ISRAEL SOUNDED AS THOUGH ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAD AGREED TO SATISFY THE DEMANDS OF THE PALESTINIANS. HE QUOTES PRIME MINISTER MEIR AS SAYING HER GOVERNMENT HAD "DECIDED TO SATISFY THE PALESTINIANS' DEMANDS WITHOUT RESORTING TO ANY TRICKS." HOWEVER, HALF-HOUR BEFORE EXPIRATION OF ULTIMATUM ISRAELI ARMY SHOCK UNITS BEGAN INTENSIVE FIRE AGAINST SCHOOL AND BROKE INTO BUILDING. ALL THREE PALESTINIANS WERE KILLED, TWENTY SCHOOL CHILDREN DIED, AND MANY WERE WOUNDED.

4. REPORTING REACTION OF MAALOT AFFAIR, OREKHOV SAYS ARAB PRESS AND RADIO ARE SAYING THE "TREACHEROUS ACTIONS OF THE ISRAELI MILITARY LED TO YESTERDAY'S TRAGIC BLOODLETTING." OREKHOV ALSO ASSERTS RESIDENTS OF MAALOT CONDEMNED "BLOODY ACTS OF TEL AVIV" AND MET DAYAN, WHO LED ISRAELI FORCES, WITH CRIES OF "MURDERER."

5. OREKHOV CONCLUDES THAT ISRAEL HASTENED TO BLAME LEBANON FOR THE MAALOT TRAGEDY. ACCORDING TO BEIRUT PAPER AS SHARQ, HE REPORTS, U.S. AMBASSADOR CONVEYED TO LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AN ISRAELINOTE COUCHED IN SHARP TERMS WHICH CONTAINED A THREAT OF ATTACK AGAINST VITAL LEBANESE CENTERS. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS ACCORDINGLY TAKEN MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN DEFENSES AND HAS PLACED FORCES ON ALERT.

6. ROME-DATELINED TASS ACCOUNT (SOVIETSKAYA ROSSIYA MAY 17) ALSO STRESSES ISRAELI RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEATHS OF "PARTISANS" AND SCHOOLCHILDREN. ARTICLE'S CONCLUSION (CARRIED ALSO IN PRAVDA AS SEPARATE ITEM) MAKES MINOR CONCESSION TO EVEN HANDEDNESS IN REPORT THAT THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON THE SCHOOL AS WELL AS THE SEIZURE OF CHILDREN AS HOSTAGES" IS EVOKING SERIOUS CONDEMNATION FROM WORLD PUBLIC OPINION.

7. SEPARATE TASS STORY REPORTS ISRAELI BOMBING OF BEIRUT SUBURBS INCLUDING ROAD TO AIRPORT.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PARAMILITARY FORCES, CHILDREN, PRESS COMMENTS, SCHOOLS, MAALOT, AIR COMBAT OPERATIONS, REPRISALS  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GarlanWA  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 22 MAY 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <22 MAY 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <25 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SOVIET PRESS REACTION TO MAALOT KILLINGS  
**TAGS:** PFOR, UR, XF, IS  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005